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ABSTRACT

Historically, the place of career education in the educational agenda has not been clear. No shared belief exists as to how schools ought to prepare students for adult life. This digest outlines a new model of career education. Schools need to have clear and specific outcomes for each aspect of personal growth and development for students. Goals, such as self awareness, should enable students to analyze changing personal attitudes and values and explain how they relate to a range of choices. Subsequently, schools must embed career development into the curriculum, starting in the primary grades, and the program must take students out of the classroom and into the community. Some approaches that can be used include going beyond providing information about jobs and the world of work and giving students a variety of work opportunities associated with a project or societal issues. Furthermore, since career, academic, and social development are equally important, they should be equally represented in program planning and evaluation. Students' aspirations, interests, and career exploration skills must be included in educational programs to effectively address students' needs. Successful programs can help all students experience an enriched education. (RJM)

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by Aryeh Gitterman, Marion Levi & Susan Wayne

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ERIC DIGEST

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Outcomes of School Career Development

Aryeh Gitterman, Marion Levi & Susan Wayne

Overview

Students, parents, government, and the business community have been telling schools for a long time that they are not satisfied with what educators do in preparing students for the future (Posterski & Bibby, 1988). Students, critics claim, are not adequately trained for the high-tech jobs of today and tomorrow, or for the reality of repeated career change. (Williams & Millinoff, 1990). There is also strong social pressure for greater equity in career opportunity. More females, visible minorities, children of economically disadvantaged parents, and physically challenged students are expected to be able to acquire occupations which are associated with higher earning power, more security and prestige, and higher job satisfaction.

Historically, the place of career education in the educational agenda has not been clear. No shared belief exists as to how schools ought to prepare students for adult life. The patchwork of programs such as transition-to-work, technological education, employability skills, and cooperative education are important, but they do not adequately address the career development needs of students.

A New Vision of Career Education

The new vision is that schools will make a significant contribution towards "seeing that the future labour force is well prepared for adult and working life, able to make informed career decisions, capable of managing successful career transitions, and committed to life-long personal development, education and training" (Watts, 1988). This means that schools must act deliberately to ensure that all students have access to current and accurate information about careers. Teachers must also understand the importance of providing students with learning experiences outside of the school walls and that decision making strategies are crucial to helping students make successful transitions to work, further education, and training.

Outcomes for Career Education

Career education can be viewed as a distinct, yet closely linked, aspect of personal growth and development. Increasingly, career education is focusing on three aspects of the individual: self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and decision and transition learning (Watts, 1988). These components form the core of an effective career education model.

In order to implement this vision of career education, schools need to have clear and specific outcomes for each component. The following examples (Burke, 1993) illustrate each of the above dimensions.

Self-Awareness

Students will be able to achieve the following:

- Analyze changing personal attitudes, values, interests, and abilities, and explain how they relate to a range of choices.
- Describe a personal accomplishment and specify the skills which were used in this achievement.
- Recognize and develop ways of dealing with stereotyping, discrimination, and racism.
- Develop and apply skills for studying, organizing, time management, planning, researching, accessing school and community resources, and goal setting.
- Explain the inter-relationship of personal responsibility, good work habits, and career opportunities.

Opportunity Awareness

Students will be able to demonstrate heightened awareness:

- Explain basic concepts about the economy and work, such as market forces, entrepreneurship, responsibilities and commitments of employers and employees, and the role of trade unions.
- Identify types and levels of work performed across a broad range of occupations and a variety of settings.
- Describe the present and future role of technology in the workplace and society as a whole.
- Analyze the value of learning as a result of visits to a variety of community settings and work sites.
- Demonstrate the attitudes necessary for success in work and learning.
- Describe how sex role stereotyping, bias, and discrimination limit career choices, opportunity and achievement.

Decision and Transition Learning

Students will also be able to exhibit increased decisivness:

- Identify knowledge and skills taught in school subjects which are transferable to work, community, family, and leisure activities.

- Describe a range of opportunities for secondary and post-secondary education and training in both the immediate and long term, (also learn how to gain access to these opportunities and where they may lead.)
- Identify ways of making decisions and apply the knowl edge to specific life situations.
- Develop an action plan to accomplish occupational, edu cational, leisure, and/or family goals.
- Develop skills for making transitions and for dealing with unexpected situations.

Achieving Outcomes:

Approaches to Career Education in the Classroom

Gitterman, Levi and Ziegler (1993) outline five approaches to career education to help achieve the outcomes described above.

1. Career education goes beyond providing information about jobs and the world of work. In schools, career education typically consists of providing information about specific occupations. This needs to be broadened to show students a variety of work opportunities associated with a project or societal issue.For example, when investigating hazardous waste management, students might meet engineers, technicians, union representatives, environmental lawyers, politicians, urban planners, chemists, and government regulators. Career education conceived in this way invites debate on equity issues by valuing everyone's work and family and by opening career paths to all students.

2. Career education thus becomes part of the total school curriculum, rather than a subject taught in isolation. Career education should encourage students to see the relevance of school subjects. Through the study of history, for example, students can gain some grasp of how economic events affect present and future patterns of work and society. Similarly, a knowledge of geography can help students better understand the connection between environmental conditions and different social and economic opportunities.

3. Career education should incorporate planned, out-of-classroom experiences, beginning when children enter school. Field trips offer a natural way of exposing children to their community and to the larger world, capitalizing on their native curiosity. Such trips also provide a natural laboratory for career exploration. For example, a school might visit a zoo one year and a hospital the next, and in each case, students may explore the jobs people perform as the children observe the animals or the medical technology. Another school might explore the range of jobs held by parents and others in libraries, shops, offices, and factories. Early career exploration experiences are important to promote diversity, even though they do not have specific career path implications.

4. Schools should address the career as well as the academic dimension of children's lives. Career, academic, and social development are equally important for all students and should be equally represented in program planning and evaluation, beginning in early school years. Students' aspirations, interests, and career exploration skills must be included in educational programs to effectively address students' needs. Career education is developmental, as is literacy or numeracy education.

5. Community involvement and support are essential for career education to be successful. Schools cannot do it alone. In order to ensure that career education is effective and reality-based, it requires the support of resources both within and outside the school. Business, industry, labor, government, other educational institutions, and the community of parents and neighbors all need to in as partners in new and creative ways.

Conclusion

Outcomes based on career education, linked to a planned and systematic educational program, provides the opportunity to involve schools and the community in a real and reciprocal way. Career development programs in schools must do more than provide information. They must be embedded in the school curriculum starting in the primary grades and they must take students out of the classroom and into the community. A successful program has the potential to help all students experience an enriched education; such students are better prepared for their working lives, and, in the long run, to society.

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